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INFO RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 6708  
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI 2710  
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 2152  
RUEHPF/AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH 1815  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0901  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0094  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0187  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0124  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0666  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 1202  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0040  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0442  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0560  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 000660

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, PRM

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KIRF](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#) [LA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES MISSING CHILDREN WITH MFA

REF: VIENTIANE 655

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia M. Haslach, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) As a follow-up to the July 13 like-minded group meeting on the missing children (reftel), this morning Ambassador met with MFA Europe-Americans Department DG Southam Sakhonnhinyom to convey our continued concern about the children's situation. Ambassador first reminded Southam of the case, pointing out the children were returned from Thailand to Bolikhamsai province in early December last year, and that the Lao government had so far stated that it was unaware of their whereabouts. She said that the Thai government had indicated its willingness to take the children back, and had provided the Lao government with information about the deportation.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador noted that Foreign Minister Thongloun had refused a request from representatives of the UN, Australia, Canada, the EU, New Zealand, the UK and the U.S. to call on the FM to discuss the matter. The Ambassador wished to use her meeting with the DG to underline the ongoing concern of the international community that Laos resolve the matter as soon as possible, in the humanitarian interests of the children. She added that the longer the fate of the children remained outstanding, the more it would become a drag on other important issues in Laos' relations with the international community.

¶3. (C) Southam replied by "noting" the Ambassador's points, and assured her that the FM was indeed very busy and unable to meet at this juncture. As former FM Somsavat had already explained, the GoL was also concerned about the children and the government was continuing to cooperate with the international community on locating them. He referenced the President's June 22 letter to the UN Secretary-General, saying that this letter reflected the GoL's official view of the issue. His government was continuing its contact with Thailand on the children. Southam continued that the GoL's goal was to see the children reunited with their parents; if the authorities located them, they would send them back right away. He concluded by pointing out to the Ambassador that the former FM had called the deportation of the children a

"barbaric act."

¶4. (C) Comment: Our other like-minded colleagues will be making similar calls on Southam and his colleagues in the Asia-Pacific and International Offices over the next week, reminding the GoL that the children remain a deep concern of the like-minded group. We anticipate that the DGs will dutifully report the meetings to the Deputy Ministers, and the calls will hopefully come to the attention of the Minister. FM Thongloun is new to his position, and we think it important that he be given early exposure to the international community's worry about the children. He also holds a seat on the Politburo and is well situated to be able to influence the government's handling of the case, if he chooses. End comment.

HASLACH